

# The Standard-Examiner Sunday Feature Section

## Europe's Shameless Robbery of American Tourists



"After paying ten per cent of the amount of her hotel bill with the understanding that this relieved her from all tipping, she was confronted by a threatening group of waiters, chambermaids, porters, bellboys, housekeepers, doormen, elevator operators, and telephone girls who angrily insisted that the ten per cent charge was only for the lowest menials of the kitchen and not for these more distinguished servants."

### Outrageously Gouged By Hotels and Restaurants, Swindled By Bogus Art Dealers and Plundered By an Army of Professional Thieves—No Wonder So Many Travelers Are Returning Disgusted

ALL summer long the Europe-bound liners have been carrying across the Atlantic unprecedentedly large numbers of American tourists.

And now these thousands of travelers are returning, sadly disillusioned, many of them, by the shameless way they have been robbed, cheated and swindled in Europe and firmly determined to be content hereafter with "seeing America first."

According to hundreds of indignant stories that are being told, the American tourist is a marked man from the minute he walks up the gangplank with his ticket to Europe in his hand. He is lucky if he escapes with his life and health, and even a small fraction of his pocketbook.

The voyage itself is not so bad, particularly on the American operated boats. Yet even here the traveler continually is harassed by clever crooks, who defy the earnest efforts of the steamship officials to keep them from traveling back and forth on the great liners.

These international bandits pose as wealthy men of leisure or prosperous businessmen. They lure their fellow passengers into crooked card games and force them in every imaginable way. In the season now drawing to a close they are believed to have reaped a richer harvest than ever before.

But it is after his landing on the other side that the tourist's real troubles begin. As soon as he sets foot on European soil he becomes the victim of a widespread system of overcharging and graft that amounts to nothing less than robbery of the boldest, most shameless kind.

Also he is the prey of the cleverest professional thieves from all over the world, who have flocked to Europe to fill their pockets at the expense of the rich Americans.

Grace George, the charming and talented wife of William A. Brady, the electrical manager, was robbed of a fur coat and other valuables while on a visit to Berlin. Miss Fanny Ward, the American actress, lost several thousand dollars' worth of property in broad daylight when she fell into the hands of a Parisian taxicab bandit. Many other Americans have suffered even heavier losses at the hands of the shrewd and desperate criminals who infest every

Easily a returning traveler who does not complain of the exorbitant charges for rooms and meals in hotels, the

system of graft spread over every place of interest to visitors, the eternal tip system, which is so efficient as practically to be unavoidable, and the enormous charges for every last thing an American might want. Some of the extortion practiced is so outrageous as to be almost unbelievable.

As soon as the tourists from America begin to arrive the prices for hotel rooms leap upward, the menus are priced as if all the food were out of season, and the charges for wines pass through a mushroom development.

In Paris there exist two distinct—as wide apart as the poles—systems of charges. One is for the native, and the other for the visitor. Several of the hotels quite frankly show their hands by printing menus in the two languages, bearing the different prices. An American is charged \$12 a day for a room; a Parisian may sleep in just as good a room for \$4 a day.

One of the methods being resorted to by unscrupulous hotel proprietors in Paris and other cities to lure American tourists into their clutches and squeeze from them every penny they possibly can is to advertise that tipping is positively prohibited. To relieve their guests of the necessity of distributing individual tips to porters, chambermaids, waiters, and other servants they announce that a charge of ten per cent to cover these will be added to the amount of the bill.

Do these hotels do as they agree? Are no tips demanded when this ten per cent charge is paid? Not a bit of it, as Mrs. Donald Brian, wife of the well known actor, can testify.

Like many another American tourist Mrs. Brian paid the Paris hotel where she had been a guest for several weeks the added ten per cent charge that was supposed to cover all tips. But as she



On the left—Grace George famous stage star and wife of William A. Brady, who was the victim of some of the bold robbers that infest Berlin

was about to leave she was confronted by a threatening group of waiters, chambermaids, porters, bellboys, housekeepers, doormen, elevator operators and telephone girls who angrily insisted that the ten per cent she had just paid was only for the lowest menials of the kitchen and not for these more distinguished servants. They made it plain that unless she tipped them all they expected her departure would be made disagreeable.

In vain she protested to the man behind the desk. He would neither refund the ten per cent she had paid nor



Mrs. Donald Brian, the wife of the well known actor and one of the many tourists who had so unpleasant experiences with Europe's grasping greed for American dollars



On the left—Fanny Ward, the American actress who was robbed by a Paris taxicab bandit

articles of apparel show similar over-charges.

The way the gullible Americans are swindled into paying enormous prices for bogus masterpieces has set all France to laughing. We have bought in the last two years over 30,000 landscapes painted by Corot alone, and hundreds upon hundreds of "genuine" Rembrandts, Murillos and Velasquezes are brought back every year from Europe by American buyers.

The enormous numbers of "antiques" which are sold yearly to the ignorant visitors would fill a city. One Paris newspaper printed with glee the announcement that it was estimated that over 3,000 beds in which Marie Antoinette had slept and over 10,000 harpsichords upon which she had trailed her frail fingers existed in prominent places in America.

In Paris it seems to be granted by the government that after 7 o'clock at night every taxicab driver may do his best to make new history in crime. They are allowed to charge whatever they please, and if you happen to go to the theater or to some supper club and are returning to your hotel by taxi you are about as safe from harm as if you were on a sinking boat.

If you do not speak French like a native the fare doubles at each block. You may pay anywhere from \$5 to \$10 or more to go the distance you have covered during the day for 70 or 80 cents. This method of getting your money is too slow for some of the taxicab operators and they do not hesitate

to put a gun to your head and demand your pocketbook and other valuables.

At Deauville, one of the best known and most fashionable of the resorts in Europe, the hotel prices have been raised to unheard of heights. A room at the leading hotel cannot be obtained by an American under \$25 a day.

London has boasted that all American visitors would be charged exactly the same prices as the native English. While this may be true so far as some of the better known hotels are concerned, still from the supper clubs and the innumerable places of interest which have sprung up for the sole purpose of amusing the visitors come amazing tales of downright robbery. Also the tip system is worked in England in a peculiarly vicious way.

The overcharging of Americans is confined to no one country or locality. The Alpine resorts have frankly declared that they are out for every American dollar they can get.

In Austria and Germany the slogan is that "Americans must pay our reparation debts—if not as a loan, then as individuals." The shopkeepers, hotel proprietors, etc., have received an official recognition from the government that they can charge just what they please—and the more the better! In Bavaria, which is the richest agricultural section of Central Europe, fresh milk and cream are kept from the tourists and only tinned milk can be bought.

In addition to the gouging and swindling which the visitor undergoes, there are added the innumerable indignities and humiliations imposed upon them by the petty officials everywhere. They are imposed upon almost universally in the matter of their passports. Unnecessary delays, inconvenient service and ribald laughter are meted out to them by the officers in charge, wherever they go. They are mocked at and jeered and made a national joke by their gullibility and non-resistance.

Many returning Americans are too proud to admit how they have been cheated, robbed and swindled. But enough confessions are coming out to make it plain that a summer in Europe is hardly what it is cracked up to be.

By the very shamelessness of their methods Europe's profiteers are killing the golden goose of American tourist travel. Travellers from these shores have learned their lesson and it is predicted that next year will see no such rush to get across the Atlantic as the season just closing has witnessed. As a result of Europe's robbery of its visitors, seeing America first promises to become more popular than ever before.